LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

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PDF Format

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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

December Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term December average:

Great Lakes Basin	96%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	123%
Lake	83%

Changing Conditions Highlight the Need to Check the Six-month Water Level Forecast Each Month

After experiencing unseasonably mild weather during much of November and December, the Great Lakes region saw a dramatic shift back to winter temperatures during the first week of January.

Since weather and attendant water supply conditions can change from one month to the next month, it is important to check the latest six-month water level forecast each month. Although this is true no matter which lake you are interested in, the change in the forecast for Lakes Michigan-Huron since the October 2003 Bulletin is a good example of why checking for the latest forecast is necessary.

Since the beginning of November when the October Bulletin was posted, water level conditions on Lakes Michigan-Huron have improved 15 cm relative to average in response to above average water supplies. As a result, Lakes Michigan-Huron began 2004 at about the same level as they were one year ago. While this may not sound like good news, it is if you consider what the forecast looked like at the beginning of November. At that time, the 6-month forecast indicated that if low supply conditions persisted during November and December, levels on Lakes Michigan-Huron could have started 2004 near their period-of-record lows of 1964-65. Thanks to the higher than average supplies received over the last two months the forecasted range of probable water levels has shifted upwards several centimetres.

The Canadian Hydrographic Service posts the latest Bulletin, which includes the forecast, around the 3rd of each month. Since the shift to cold temperatures could lead to significant evaporation and greater than average water level declines during January, be sure to check next month's forecast too.

Great Lakes Water Level Information

	December Monthly Mean Level		Beginning of January Level	
Lake	Compared to Monthly Average	Compared to One Year	Compared to Beginning-of-Month Average	Compared to One Year

Superior Lakes Michigan-Huron 89%

Lake Ontario 113%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

December Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term December average:

Lake Superior 88%

Lake Erie 97%

Lake Huron 88%

Lake Ontario 105%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

	(1918-2002)	Ago	(1918-2002)	Ago
Superior	23 cm below	7 cm below	22 cm below	6 cm below
Michigan-Huron	47 cm below	1 cm below	45 cm below	2 cm below
St. Clair	24 cm below	6 cm above	17 cm below	10 cm above
Erie	9 cm below	8 cm above	2 cm below	10 cm above
Ontario	21 cm above	41 cm above	25 cm above	46 cm above

Ice Cover

In spite of the mild temperatures experienced throughout the basin at the end of December, ice continues to cover shallow bays and inlets. You can find the latest ice conditions on the Great Lakes by visiting the Canadian Ice Service website.

Lake Erie-Niagara River Ice Boom

of the Lake Erie-Niagara River Ice Boom was completed on December 20th. Preparations for span placement began on December 3rd when eight floatation barrels were installed. Eight barrels were installed on the 4th and the final seven were placed on the 5th. All strings of pontoons were removed from their summer storage area and placed in the water behind the Buffalo Harbor breakwater by December 10th. Installation of the ice boom's 22 spans followed on the 16th, the 19th, and the 20th.

Great Lakes e-News

The Great Lakes Update, is an electronic newsletter featuring the latest news about the Great Lakes, including new publications and reports, events and conferences, and updates on developments in the Government of Canada Great Lakes program. The year 2004 promises to be a busy one for the Great Lakes, so look to the Update to keep informed.

Website Update

The International Joint Commission (IJC) has updated its web site. Still located at http://www.ijc.org/ it features several new functions such as a virtual library, a search engine, and an improved navigation system.

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URL: http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/water/level-news/ln200401_e.html